

PRESS RELEASE FOR DISTRIBUTION
Helsinki, Tallinn and Warsaw 1 April 2011



Victims of trafficking for forced labour are difficult to identify

A new three country study takes a comprehensive look at trafficking for forced labour in Finland, Poland and Estonia. The study shows that the level of awareness of trafficking for forced labour is generally low in the three countries, and situations of exploitation are difficult for authorities and other actors to identify.

The study, undertaken by researchers in the three countries, show that Finland is a destination country, Estonia mainly an origin country and Poland both a destination and an origin country of trafficking for forced labour. Both Finland and Poland have been destination countries for victims coming from Asia, Eastern Europe, Balkan countries as well as other EU Member States. The current high unemployment rate and the decrease of the average income in Estonia is linked to an increased risk of trafficking for forced labour and labour exploitation of Estonian nationals who seek employment abroad.

The research uncovers situations of exploitation in the agriculture, shipyards, construction, restaurant and service sectors, as well as in commerce, seasonal jobs and in domestic work. Victims are exploited in many different ways. The victims are usually paid very low salaries without any mandatory compensations or extras, or they receive no salary at all. Victims find themselves under constant supervision and control and they are very dependent on their employer. They often work long hours 6–7 days a week. Victims may have written work contracts in languages they do not understand. The workers' freedom of movement is limited and their passports are taken away. Victims are isolated from the surrounding society and remain unaware of their own rights and the terms of employment that are acceptable in the destination country.

Problems regarding the identification of victims and cases and the provision of victim assistance are similar in all three countries. The victims rarely contact authorities on their own. They do not identify themselves as victims of trafficking and are afraid of the authorities and of deportation. The phenomenon of labour trafficking is particularly hidden. It is clear that the cases that come to the attention of the authorities represent merely the tip of the iceberg. Only very serious cases are identified as trafficking for forced labour in Poland, and the victims have problems getting the help they need. In Finland, insufficient awareness on trafficking for forced labour among different authorities and actors, as well as stereotypical thinking hinder the identification of trafficking cases. Cases are usually dealt with as extortionate work discrimination instead of trafficking. In Estonia, no specific criminal prohibition of trafficking in persons exists and the level of awareness of trafficking for forced labour is not only low among the authorities, but also among the general public. The study makes several general recommendations regarding the prevention and fight against trafficking in persons.

address: HEUNI
POB 444
FI-00531
Finland
phone: +358 10 366 5280
fax: +358 10 366 5290
e-mail: heuni@om.fi

The researchers conclude that practitioners should be educated about the elements which constitute trafficking for forced labour so that they can identify potential victims and cases. Victims also need assistance and help to overcome their ordeal and to be able to partake in criminal proceedings. Specific low-threshold services targeted to victims of trafficking for forced labour are needed in all three countries. Finland has a National Rapporteur on human trafficking, and this kind of independent office should also be established in Estonia and Poland. In addition, more significant resources for authorities, NGOs and other actors are needed to combat trafficking in all three countries.

The research is the first one of this extent in Finland, Estonia and Poland. The research covers the years 2004–2010 and was carried out with the support of the Prevention of and Fight against Crime Programme of the Directorate-General Justice, Freedom and Security of the European Commission. The report comprises five parts: an introduction, three separate country reports, and a concluding chapter.

Full report: Trafficking for Forced Labour and Labour Exploitation in Finland, Poland and Estonia. Anniina Jokinen, Natalia Ollus and Kauko Aromaa (eds.). HEUNI Reports 68. Helsinki: HEUNI. 2011.

Country report Finland: Work on Any Terms: Trafficking for Forced Labour and Exploitation of Migrant Workers in Finland by Anniina Jokinen, Natalia Ollus and Minna Viuhko.

Country report Poland: Trafficking for Forced Labour in Poland by Zbigniew Lasocik and Łukasz Wiczorek.

Country report Estonia: Trafficking for Forced Labour and Labour Exploitation in Estonia by Maris Kask and Anna Markina.

The full report can be downloaded at: www.heuni.fi In addition, each country report is available in local language from the respective authors. Further information is available from:

Overall project and country report on Finland/HEUNI:

Ms. Natalia Ollus, Senior Programme Officer, natalia.ollus@om.fi, tel: +358 10 3665284

Ms. Anniina Jokinen, Researcher, anniina.jokinen@om.fi, tel: +358 10 3665367

Country report on Poland/Human Trafficking Studies Centre of Warsaw University:

Mr. Zbigniew Lasocik, Professor, zlasocik@uw.edu.pl, +48 22 5435309

Mr. Łukasz Wiczorek, Researcher, lukasz.wiczorek@uw.edu.pl

Country report on Estonia/Faculty of Law of Tartu University:

Ms. Anna Markina, Lecturer, anna.markina@ut.ee

Ms. Maris Kask, Researcher, maris.kask@ut.ee

address: HEUNI
POB 444
FI-00531
Finland

phone: +358 10 366 5280

fax: +358 10 366 5290

e-mail: heuni@om.fi